

“Digital Diaries: Resistance, Self-Representation and Civic Journalism in the Russian-Language Internet”

Abstracts

Anastasia Denisova, ‘Parody Microbloggers as Chroniclers and Commentators on Russian Political Reality’

In the course of my research, I have identified a number of satirical accounts on Russian Twitter that pretend to tweet on behalf of major Russian political actors and institutions, e.g. the mustache of Dmitry Peskov (Vladimir Putin's spokesperson), Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, the Kremlin etc. They offer a daily scrutiny and analysis of the news, quickly comment and place current events in a broader context, stimulating a public discussion on the corrupt officials and poor management of the country. Their microblogging accounts therefore can be seen as politicised "diaries" - feedback to the news and propaganda. They demonstrate an ample example of everyday awareness, commentary and resistance. As amusing as their satirical inputs, memes and jokes can be, they nonetheless form an alternative political discourse on the Russian Twitter.

Irina Kotkina, ‘Self-Representation in the World of Opera: What Do Blogs of Famous Russian Singers Tell About?’

This research studies how famous and well-known Russian opera singers self-represent themselves in the blogs and social networks, which are carried out either by themselves or by their managers or fans on their behalf. These blogs share not only information but also emotional reactions to certain events, roles, and performances, which gives the reader the illusion of communication and intimacy with an opera star. This creates an effect of equality of the star and the fan, which was not imagined in the previous

epochs in Russia, when opera stars were very socially distant from common listeners and positioned themselves on the very top of the 'Soviet aristocracy'.

Sergiy Kurbatov, "Who are we? Where are we from? Where are we going?": The Bloggers of "Ukrainian Pravda" and Their *Vox Populi*'

In this presentation I try to analyze the role of bloggers in the general context of one of the leading Ukrainian internet mass media "Ukrainian Pravda", which was established by Georgiy Gongadze in April, 2000. Who are these persons, who could promote their own ideas and approaches, using this platform? What are the most popular messages of the bloggers and how their popularity correlates with general political and social situation in Ukraine? What is the system of receiving feedbacks from the readers and how do bloggers manage it? These and other questions would be a background of my presentation as a kind of attempt to elaborate sociological portraits of bloggers and to identify their place in the general concept of indicated mass media.

Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa, 'From the Active Blogging to the Political Leadership or to "the Parties without Leaders"'

The internet creates the conditions for the mass self-representation, but in the internet communication "the elite" of the highly popular users, who have hundreds "likes" per posts, differ radically from their almost invisible and silent followers. The distinction, which is also inherent in any political movement, acquires in the online context a number of specific features, which drives some researchers to the conclusion that the internet rise "the party without leaders", short-term, unsustainable, and generally harmful for the offline political movements (Morozov, 2011: 328). Whether it is possible to speak about "the leaders" in the politicized discourse that is evident in the internet? Can we consider the well-known bloggers the political leaders, if they have never participated in other forms of political or civil activity? In the same extent as

the internet establishes the communication over and across any national and social borders, the leadership institute which is manifested by the dichotomy of "leaders-followers" together with the concept of the activism itself are also blurred by the internet. Alongside with the discussion on the personalities of "the leaders" of the computer mediated political communication and the technologies they use to promote their agenda and to mobilize their followers, this paper problematize the nature of the political leadership in the era of the internet.

Saara Ratilainen, 'Narratives of the Self and the Other: Digital Storytelling through Travel Images'

This presentation focuses upon the photographic narratives created by Russian travel bloggers. It uses the framework of digital storytelling as a starting point to analyse how the plethora of images taken during travel and then posted on different blogging platforms are used to form a coherent narrative about the encounters with "other" cultures, people and places. Digital storytelling, as described by Lundby (2008), is "a narrative and social process" consisting of "the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources." Digital storytelling also represents the movement, in which individual people are encouraged to appropriate digital technology to create reflexive representations of Self and in this way gain voice in society via digital publishing channels (Hartley & McWilliam 2009). Digital storytelling is thus perceived first and foremost as a social and technological process that takes place in the sphere of new media and relies on the universal human desire to "tell stories". In my presentation I apply this framework to the analysis of travel photographs and wish to see what kind of digital storytelling supports the photographic representation of travel experience in Russian travel blogs, i.e., how images, that at first sight might look like miscellaneous touristic snapshots, create stories of the Self and

the Other. More specifically, I will analyse how the formula consisting of the frame story and embedded stories figures as a central narrative device through which the traveler reveals the stories behind his/her photographs and creates new stories with photographs.

Anton Semakin, 'A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Twittering in Russia'

In my presentation I will relate the story of my blogging experience, explicate know-hows of the popularity on the platform of twitter.com in the Russian-language internet, and discuss main themes and stylistic specificities of this genre of self-representation in the digital environment. I will specifically reflect upon the conditions and possibilities of voicing a political position in Runet, and dwell on the problem of framing twitter accounts as "art projects" of sorts, seen through the prism of creative self-expression.

Mikhail Suslov, 'Staging the Self or Doing the Missionary Work: Orthodox Blogosphere in the Russian-Language Internet'

This paper discusses multifarious strategies of the self-presentation in 'Ortho-blogging'. The analysis is grounded on the study of the Russian-language blogs on LiveJournal.com, belonging to priests and lay activists of the Orthodox Church (of different denominations but with the focus on the canonical Moscow Patriarchy). The paper weaves together digital possibilities of this channel of communication and self-description (e.g. interactivity, anonymity, performativity) with the cultural background of the bloggers. The special attention is paid to the theological concept of *kenosis* ('self-belittling') and the literary tradition of writing diaries in the Russian context. My argument is that in spite of the admonitions by the highest clerics to consider blogs as instruments for the Church mission, the majority of the blogging priests use this technology to create the narrative of the Self, drawing on such rhetorical devices as (self-) irony and litany.

Galina Zvereva, 'Blogging in Russian Academia: Practices of Self-Representation

University professionals in Russia representing various fields of social sciences and humanities employ multiple platforms of social media for making different sorts of statements; these platforms include sites on education and popular science; web-pages of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV-channels; diaries on LiveJournal; forums of diverse digital communities, etc. Forms of online activities of university professionals range from publishing interviews, videos and texts at digital platforms open to the public (e.g., Postnauka, Gefter, Arzamas, Meduza, etc.) to writing on personal blogs. Exploration of these ways and strategies of performing and communicating with audiences on topical issues of history and contemporary social life make it possible to identify a wide range of digital self-representations of academic professionals. A detailed study of places of their presence on social media, as well as a comparative analysis of practices of self-representation, allow investigating the role of blogging in the individual positioning of intellectuals. This study aims to analyse ways of self-representation and self-description of the academic professionals in their blogs of different formats. This kind of research could zoom into the practices of building relationships between professionals and rank users of digital resources, which, in turn, could result in a better understanding of the specifics of production and legitimation of knowledge in humanities and social sciences in an open network culture.

Notes on participants

Anastasia Denisova is a lecturer in Journalism at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, and a doctoral researcher in Social Media at CAMRI,

University of Westminster, London, UK. Before starting her academic career, she worked as a journalist in Russia for over decade in the capacity of television news editor and reporter, magazine editor and columnist, and a freelance contributor to major magazines. Anastasia had also been involved with UNICEF Kosovo as the media consultant in 2013, offering her insights to the development of UNICEF's Innovations Lab and digital media strategy. She is currently researching the role of internet memes as the casual artful means of political resistance in the restricted Russian media environment.

anastasia.denisova@my.westminster.ac.uk

Irina Kotkina holds a PhD in history from the European University Institute (Florence) and a Candidate of Cultural Studies degree (PhD equivalent) from the Russian State University for Humanities in Moscow. She is employed as project researcher at Södertörn University, Sweden. Her current project is called "The Vision of Eurasia: Eurasianist Influences on Politics, Culture and Ideology in Russia Today". Dr. Kotkina is studying cultural politics and all aspects of Russian culture. She publishes broadly on Russia's cultural policy, opera and theatre. Ik341@yandex.ru

Sergiy Kurbatov, PhD, is head of the department of leadership and institutional development at the Institute of Higher Education, National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine and an affiliated researcher at the Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden. Among his main research interests are the transformation of university education in the context of globalization, quality assurance in education, and university rankings. Also, Sergiy Kurbatov is actively involved in the process of analyzing the problem of political and social transformations in Ukraine. sergiy.kurbatov@gmail.com

Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa, Professor, PhD, Candidate of Sciences, Head of Department of Political Science and International Relations, Dean of the Faculty for Humanities of the Russian Social State University (Moscow, Russia); Lecturer of the Department of Slavonic Studies of the University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UK). gn254@cam.ac.uk

Saara Ratilainen, postdoctoral researcher at the University Helsinki (Finland). Specialising in Russian contemporary culture and media, her research covers such topics as class and gender, consumer culture, lifestyle media and online amateur productions in post-Soviet Russia. Her recent publications include: 'Old Title, New Traditions: Ideals of Womanhood in *Krest'ianka*' (*Feminist Media Studies*, 2014) and 'Tourists from the East: Perception of Russian Consumers in the Finnish Press' (*Ekonomicheskaiia sotsiologiia*, 2015, co-authored with Olga Gurova). Her current research project focuses on digital subcultures as sites of symbolic economy and postindustrial professionalisation. saara.ratilainen@helsinki.fi

Anton Semakin is a visual artist, designer, and a computer graphics expert. He has participated in various art exhibitions, among which are *Obeshchanie peizazha* [A Promise for the Landscape] in Perm Museum for Contemporary Arts, 2015; *Vektor Permi* [A Perm's Vector] in Marat Gel'man's gallery, Moscow, 2013; *Bezuslovnaia real'nost': Novoe iskusstvo Permi* [Unconditional Reality: The New Arts of Perm] in Erarta: Museum for the Contemporary Arts, St Petersburg, 2012. In his blog on Twitter with 9,500 subscribers he discusses societal and political issues. antonsemakin@yandex.ru

Mikhail Suslov is a Marie Curie researcher at the Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University. He obtained his PhD in history

from the European University Institute in Florence in 2009. His research interests include Russian, and post-Soviet intellectual history, conservative and right-wing political ideology, critical geopolitics, conceptual history of the Russian Orthodox Church. His current study deals with the post-Soviet geopolitical ideas and new media. Mikhail.suslov@ucrs.uu.se

Galina Zvereva is Professor in Cultural Studies and Head of the Department for History and Theory of Culture at the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow). She has published in the field of modern history and historiography as well as in cultural studies and Russian studies.

galazver@mail.ru